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Rep. Adam Putnam (R-Fla.) and Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) will greet Obama's arrival with a news conference in which they'll assert that Reid (D-Nev.) and Pelosi (D-Calif.) are holding up votes on offshore drilling in order to protect Obama.

They'll also begin to use "Pelosi-Reid-Obama" in the all-in-the-same-breath way that Democrats now use "Bush-McCain" — to make the parties' popular candidates indistinguishable from their less beloved incumbents.

Pelosi has told Politico that she's standing in the way on a drilling vote because she's determined to use the speaker's gavel to "save the planet." Reid said Monday that he would allow votes on amendments to a long-stalled energy package, including one on drilling, and Republican leaders were skeptically considering the offer Monday evening.

The attack on Obama and the Democratic leadership comes as some of the more partisan members of the House GOP — concerned that their party's seemingly successful energy message isn't enough to prevent electoral disaster in November — agitate for more aggressive attacks on the Democrats.

Virginia Rep. Eric Cantor, a leading voice for the party's younger generation, met last week with a few of his GOP colleagues with an eye toward a new Republican messaging strategy that focuses less on energy issues and more on the negative news about prominent Democrats.

In a preview, one GOP aide declared: "By November, every American voter will know the name of Charlie Rangel the way they knew Tom DeLay in 2006. Count on it."

Republicans have tussled internally over the tenor of their attacks on the Democratic majority since the party assumed minority status after catastrophic losses at the polls in 2006.

As a member of his party's leadership team in the House, Cantor has become a go-between for some of the most partisan bomb throwers and his colleagues in the elected leadership.

The roster at last week's meeting included some eager partisan warriors, such as California **Rep. John Campbell**, North Carolina Rep. Patrick McHenry and Georgia Rep. Tom Price.

But a less vocal colleague, Pennsylvania Rep. Charles W. Dent, was also in attendance. Retiring New York Rep. Thomas Reynolds was there, as was Texas Rep. Jeb Hensarling, chairman of the conservative Republican Study Committee, said aides familiar with the meeting.

Most of the members present believe that the party's calls for more domestic oil and gas drilling are putting Democrats on the defensive this summer. But there is a sense that members need to expand that message.

“Energy alone will not win the election for us,” said one member in attendance.

Some of the older or more moderate Republicans in the House have been reluctant to engage in a bitter partisan debate. Minority Leader John A. Boehner (R-Ohio) is often caught in the middle. But he is working with Cantor this time around.

The big question is how far to go in tarring members of the majority party.

The most basic challenge Republicans face is convincing voters that they no longer control Congress. Along those lines, Cantor and his crew will try to make the case that the Democrats have not done enough to address the sagging economy, scheduling meaningless hearings and nominal measures to lower energy costs while dodging votes on drilling, aides said. In op-eds, press conferences and floor speeches, they will also rehash quotes from the last campaign to make the point that the party in power has not lived up to its obligations, specifically with regard to the annual appropriations process.

But the hallmark of this campaign — or at least what would distinguish it from previous attacks — is the focus on specific members of the majority.

“Our members are talking about the need for Republicans to begin to tell the story to the American people that on critical issues like energy, health care, gas prices and taxes this Democrat-controlled Congress has done little to make America safer or more prosperous,” Cantor said. “This lack of action, when viewed by the American people through the lens of the Democrats’ corruption, cronyism and K Street intimidation project is creating a massive disconnect and record low approval of Congress.”

Pelosi spokesman Nadeam Elshami said that “Republicans tried this political attack before in special congressional elections this spring in Louisiana and Mississippi and they struck out both times.”

Democrats are focused on “proposals to bring immediate relief to Americans and long-term

solutions that will end our dependence on foreign oil,” Elshami continued. “Republicans on the other hand are protecting Big Oil’s record profits — fighting measures to lower prices and working to help oil companies grab more taxpayer lands. The American people will not fall for the Republican hoax.”

In a statement issued Monday, Democratic Caucus Chairman Rahm Emanuel said the GOP is still to blame for the country’s energy predicament. “Three years ago, Republicans said their energy policy would bring energy prices down and move America towards energy independence,” he said. “By any measure, their policy has failed. Unfortunately, the party that says they are for ‘all of the above’ keeps voting for more of the same.”

During the run-up to the 2006 election, Democrats built an attack message that focused squarely on the ethical transgressions of a few Republicans, branding it the GOP’s “Culture of Corruption.”

Cantor and his colleagues would like to return the favor, and they would start with Rangel, the powerful chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee. The New York Democrat has come under fire recently for having four rent-stabilized apartments in New York City and for using congressional letterhead to help raise funds for an educational center that bears his name.

Rangel has made plans to vacate one of the apartments — the one used as a campaign office — but has said there's otherwise nothing wrong with his rental arrangement, and he has argued that his efforts on behalf of the eponymous educational center violated neither the letter nor the spirit of House rules.

Republicans have challenged Rangel and others on the House floor through inference, but members of the minority have kept the gloves on. That will change if Cantor and his partisans have their way. There are tentative plans for a press conference later this week, aides said.

But even these small attacks are not enough to reclaim the majority, those involved suggest. "It's a note in a notebook," one member said. "It takes time and effort, ... but eventually it all comes crashing down."

In another sign that Republicans are readying a rough return for Obama, South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham, a John McCain loyalist, dismissed the Democratic candidate Monday as "a

world personality” and a “celebrity.”

“There is a difference between being a leader and a celebrity,” Graham told Politico, adding that he thinks voters will reward McCain for his political and military experience in the fall.